

# Unit E: Loading and Unloading

## Unit E - Loading and Unloading Passengers

### I. Use of Traffic Warning Devices

Code of Virginia (§ 46.2-1090)

#### **Slide 1, 2**

State law requires that warning devices shall be used and be in operation for at least 100 feet before any proposed stop of the bus if the speed limit is less than 35 mph and for at least 200 feet before any proposed stop of the bus if the speed limit is 35 mph or more.

#### **Slide 3**

Any person operating such bus who fails or refuses to equip such vehicle being driven by him with such equipment, or who fails to use such warning devices in the operation of such vehicle shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor.

**Discussion: Discuss Code of Virginia 46.2-1090.**

#### **Slide 4**

Buses Equipped with an Eight-Lamp System

On buses equipped with an eight-lamp system (two red and two amber on the front and two red and two amber on the rear) the amber traffic warning lights must be activated to warn surrounding drivers of an impending stop. This is done by depressing the amber light switch and then releasing it.

When the bus stops, the door is then opened. This deactivates the amber lights and activates the red traffic warning lights, the school bus crossing control arm and the school bus traffic warning sign. When the children are aboard, but before the bus resumes motion, the door must be closed. **Slide 5** This deactivates the red traffic warning lights, the school bus crossing control arm and the school bus traffic warning sign.

Buses with eight-lamp systems are equipped with a switch on the left instrument panel which will cancel the amber warning lights if they are

accidentally activated or if it is determined that a stop for pupils is not necessary.

#### **Slide 6**

A circuit interrupt feature is available for use when loading or unloading at school where space does not permit the extension of the traffic warning sign and the crossing control arm. After approaching the school curb with the amber lights operating and the bus stopped, depress the interrupt switch as the door is being opened. This maneuver deactivates the amber lights and activates the red lights without extending the traffic warning sign and the crossing control arm. When loading or unloading is completed and the door is closed, the warning system reverts to its original sequence and is ready for normal use.

Note: Any new bus placed into service on or after July 1, 2007, includes a non-sequential system of red traffic warning lights, a warning sign with flashing lights, and a crossing control arm that when the bus door is opened, the red warning lights, warning sign with flashing lights, and crossing control arm are automatically activated.

**Discussion: Discuss the characteristics of a non-sequential warning light system.**

### II. Location of the Stop

Code of Virginia (§ 46.2-893)

#### **Slide 7**

Stops should be made only at designated points. Approaching vehicles should be able to see the bus when it is loading or discharging passengers. Never stop near the crest of a hill or on a curve. All stops must be made in the right travel lane.

On a divided highway or highways having five or more lanes with the center lane used only for turning, students must be picked up and discharged on the side of the road on which they live.

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**Discussion: Discuss Code of Virginia 46.2-893. Point out Virginia Motor Vehicle roadway laws related to school buses loading and unloading.**

### III. Loading

Code of Virginia (46.2-918)

Virginia Administrative Code (8VAC20-70-80)

#### **Slide 8**

A school bus loading and unloading zone is defined as any place the school bus stops to pick up or discharge students. The bus driver is expected to be in the driver's seat before the students enter the vehicle.

**Discussion: Discuss the "Danger Zones" of a school bus.**

#### Procedures for Stopping and Loading

1. Proceed to the right travel lane of the road.
2. Slow down when approaching a stop. Apply brakes and activate the traffic warning lights to warn surrounding vehicles that the bus is stopping.
3. Approach waiting children, who should be off the road and not in the path of the vehicle. Scan environment.

Caution: Do not drive too closely to children who are waiting for the bus. Stop the bus before getting to a point where children are standing at the edge of the road.

**Discussion: Discuss the risk involved when children are not accounted for during the loading and unloading process.**

Count students and make eye contact. Children waiting on the left side of the roadway should wait for a hand signal from the driver before starting across the roadway. Check, check and recheck.

**Discussion: Discuss the proper (pre-determined by your division) hand signal and proper gesture in guiding students across the roadway.**

4. If visibility is hampered, or if unusual road conditions exist due to inclement weather, approach the bus stop with extreme caution.

#### **Slide 9**

5. Place the transmission (manual or automatic) in neutral. Engage parking brake. Do not open the door until the bus has stopped.

6. Open the front door to board students.

Students should:

#### **Slide 10**

- a. Use handrails when entering the bus.
  - b. Be seated quickly and safely.
  - c. Not be allowed to save seats.
  - d. Fill up the bus from rear to front.
  - e. Go directly to their seats when entering the bus.
  - f. Not be standing or seated in the aisle or step well.
7. Do not move the bus before all students are seated. Check to make sure students are seated and close the door.

Caution: If traffic is congested, waiting for students to be seated can increase the possibility of an accident.

### IV. Unloading

#### **Slide 11**

The driver is responsible, at all times, for the safety of the passengers, even while leaving the bus. If possible, arrange all stops so students do not have to cross the highway.

Always check the bus for those children who have fallen asleep.

#### Procedures for Stopping and Unloading

1. Slow down when approaching a designated stop. Scan environment.

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2. Activate traffic warning lights to alert traffic of your intention to stop according to the posted speed zone.
3. Stops are to be made in the right travel lane.
4. Place the transmission (manual or automatic) in neutral and apply parking brake.

### **Slide 12**

5. Before opening the door, check traffic in all directions and discharge pupils only when it is safe. Students should take three to four steps out from the bus; eight to ten steps forward, have eye contact with driver and wait for hand signal from driver; cross to center – stop - look and listen – cross on an angle away from front of the bus.

**Discussion: Discuss the risk involved when students wear loose clothing/items and/or wear restrictive gear such as hoods, headphones or sunglasses when loading and unloading.**

6. Those students who cross the highway should do so in an orderly manner and should wait for a hand signal from the driver. The driver should signal to the students to cross when all traffic has stopped and it is safe to cross. Students should then cross quickly and cautiously. Count students before loading – check crossing – count students after crossing.
7. After all pupils have cleared the roadway deactivate the traffic warning lights by closing the door. Check the danger zone area surrounding the bus (use your mirrors) and continue with the flow of traffic. Check, check, and recheck (three feet in front, right side – back – left side – back to front). All students should be accounted for before proceeding.

### **V. Loading and Unloading When Emergency Vehicle Approaches**

Code of Virginia (§ 46.2-829)

### **Slide 13**

Rules of the road require all vehicles to yield the right-of-way to approaching emergency vehicles. If an emergency vehicle approaches

from the rear, all drivers, including the school bus driver, must cautiously and as far as practical move onto the right shoulder or curb lane of the road and stop.

Caution – Before moving to the shoulder, you must judge whether it is sufficient to hold up under the weight of your vehicle. Also, never stop your vehicle where it will block an intersection.

Giving way to an emergency vehicle becomes somewhat more problematic when loading and unloading students, and will require good judgment on your part. With that thought in mind, the following three scenarios should help guide your judgment about positioning the bus when an emergency vehicle approaches while you are loading or unloading the bus.

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1. The first scenario is a school bus with students aboard, and the bus is approaching a stop, when an emergency vehicle approaches.

In this situation, the bus driver should keep the students inside the bus, deactivate the traffic warning light system, and move slowly and cautiously onto part of the right shoulder or curb lane of the roadway and stop.

If the driver has begun to unload, she/he should allow the students to move safely from the roadway, making certain the way is clear; deactivate traffic warning lights; move to the right shoulder, then allow emergency vehicle to pass.

This maneuver should indicate to the emergency vehicle driver that it is safe for that vehicle to proceed and that you have yielded the right-of-way.

2. The second scenario involves a school bus stopped in the road for loading or unloading pupils and there are pupils on the ground or in the road as an emergency vehicle is approaching.

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The bus should remain stopped with the traffic warning light system in operation to complete the loading or unloading of pupils. As soon as possible deactivate the traffic warning light system and move slowly and cautiously onto part of the right shoulder or curb lane of the road and stop.

Make sure the shoulder can support the weight, length, and height of the bus when pulling over to the side.

3. In the third scenario the school bus is approaching a stop for the purpose of loading students and has activated the warning system in advance of the pick-up point, as required by law, when an emergency vehicle approaches.

In this case the bus driver, based on the location of the children, must judge whether there is still time to pull safely to the right and yield to the emergency vehicle, or whether safety for the pupils would require the bus driver to complete the loading process.

Remember: Whatever the scenario good judgment plays the most important role.

Note: Any hazard or unusual condition shall be immediately reported to the transportation director or designees and noted on the school bus route sheet. This route sheet shall be kept in the bus at all times as a reference for the bus driver.

### VI. Post-Trip Inspection

#### Slide 15

A post trip inspection is part of the unloading process.

A proper post trip inspection will insure that no passenger is left behind or remains on the vehicle at the end of a route, a work shift, or the work day.

This inspection is critical to the safety of pupil passengers.

1. Report any malfunctions, defects or mechanical problems to the maintenance department. If a driver feels there is a problem with the bus, they should report it. Better to be safe than sorry.
2. Inspect the interior of the bus for damage.
3. Check for articles left on the bus.
4. Close all windows and doors.
5. Check for sleeping children – after each trip!

### VII. The Dangers of Loading and Unloading

#### Slide 16

1. Facts
  - During the loading or unloading process, more students are fatally injured by school buses in school bus related accidents than any other vehicle (NHTSA School Bus Driver In-service Safety Series).
  - Elementary students are more likely to be fatally injured (Kansas State Dept. of Education National School Bus Loading & Unloading Survey).
  - Students fatally injured in school bus related accidents are injured during the day in good weather conditions (Kansas State Dept. of Education National School Bus Loading & Unloading Survey).
  - More students are injured during the afternoon (Kansas State Dept. of Education National School Bus Loading & Unloading Survey).

#### 2. The Danger Zone

#### Slide 17

The “Danger Zone” is the area on all sides of the bus where children are in the most danger of not being seen by the driver (ten feet in front of the bus where the driver may be too high to see a child, ten feet on either side of the bus where a child may be in the driver’s blind spot, and the area behind the school bus).

Most students, fatally injured, are pedestrians, five to seven years old. They are hit in the “**Danger Zone**” around the bus, either by a passing vehicle or by the school bus itself.

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Young children are most likely to be injured because they:

- hurry to get on or off the bus,
- act before they think and have little experience with traffic,
- assume motorists will see them and will wait for them to cross,
- don't always stay within the bus driver's sight

### 3. Other Dangers

#### Slide 19

a. A driver should never let a student off the bus when a dangerous situation exists outside of the school bus.

#### Slide 20

b. Children should be trained and taught to alert the driver when an item is dropped or lost in or around the school bus.

### Unit Review

1. State law requires that warning devices shall be used and be in operation for at least \_\_\_\_ feet before any proposed stop of the bus if the speed limit is less than 35 mph and for at least \_\_\_\_ feet before any proposed stop of the bus if the speed limit is 35 mph or more.

2. Stops should be made only at \_\_\_\_\_ points.

3. You must place the transmission in \_\_\_\_\_ and apply the parking brake prior to loading or unloading passengers.

4. Do not open the door until the bus has \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Do not move the bus before all students are \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Always check the bus for those \_\_\_\_\_ who have fallen asleep.

7. The driver is \_\_\_\_\_, at all times, for the safety of the passengers.

8. A proper \_\_\_\_\_ inspection will insure that no passenger is left behind.

9. The “\_\_\_\_\_” is the area on all sides of the bus where children are in the most danger of not being seen by the driver.

10. A driver should never let a student off the bus when a \_\_\_\_\_ situation exists outside of the school bus.

### Answers

1. 100, 200
2. designated
3. neutral
4. stopped
5. seated.
6. children
7. responsible
8. post trip
9. Danger Zone
10. dangerous